

School Evaluation Report

Hammond High School

**5926 Calumet Avenue
Hammond
Indiana
46320**

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school:

Hammond High School serves 845 students in grades 9 through 12. This is some 200 students fewer than last academic year. Of these students, 13.4 percent are special education students and 9.4 percent are English language learners. Approximately 49 percent of the students are Black, 40 percent Hispanic, 8 percent White and 3 percent are multiracial. There is universal Title 1 eligibility.

Student attendance last academic year was 92.8 percent, well below the State average of 95.9 percent.

The school did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) again in 2010, with only 3 of the 15 categories being met. Black students and those eligible for free and reduced price lunch achieved AYP through Safe Harbor in mathematics. No student group made AYP in English language arts. Only students eligible for free and reduced price lunch managed an attendance rate for the English test that was above 95 percent. No group of students managed 95 percent attendance for the math test. At 24.29 percent, the proportion of students passing the English 10 End of Course Assessment (ECA) was very low compared with the State average of 64.07 percent. Results in Algebra I were similar, 29.05 percent compared with the State average of 62.83 percent.

The 2010 four year graduation rate of 62.6 percent was well below the Statewide figure of 84.5 percent. Only two percent of graduates passed an advanced program, compared with 12.2 percent across the State. Fifteen percent of students graduated with an Honors Diploma, compared with 30.5 percent of students across the State.

The school has adopted the turnaround model for the School Improvement Grant (SIG).

Part 2: Overview

The areas of the school that have been improved:

- More teachers are invested in helping their students achieve success, now and in the future.
- Attendance has improved and tardiness has decreased.
- Students' attitudes to their learning have improved and aspirations have been raised.
- Expectations of what students should do and can achieve have been raised.
- Behavior and relationships, both between students and between students and adults, have become more positive.
- The School Corporation has provided some effective support in key areas.
- The School Corporation has required some accountability from the school.
- A new principal, with the skills required of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) application has been appointed.
- Staff were released and others appointed in line with the strategy outlined in the SIG application.
- There is general acceptance of the need for change and most staff have bought into the change process underway.
- Students believe that more staff are 'there for them'. They value the additional time that teachers spend with them to overcome academic challenges.
- Students recognize that more adults in the building are holding them accountable and challenging them to succeed.
- There is greater consistency in the expectations of staff and their interactions with students.
- Interim test data is indicative of some improvement in students' academic outcomes.
- The use of technology is evident in many classrooms.
- Classrooms are becoming less 'teacher centered'.
- The curriculum is tied more closely to State Standards.
- There is a growing understanding of an 'assessment cycle', and the use of data to inform instruction.
- There is a greater focus on student collaboration in classrooms.
- Teachers are using learning objectives as the basis of their planning.
- There is an increasing use of rubrics to guide assessments and to help students identify what they are expected to achieve.

- There is greater consistency and coherence within the curriculum as a result of greater collaboration between teachers.
- An extended day has been introduced and is having a positive impact for some students.
- Difficulties with students' credit accumulation are being corrected. Students are much more aware of graduation requirements and their progress towards them.
- The master schedule is being more effectively used to provide appropriate programs for students.
- Classroom visits have increased and the foundations for the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) have been laid.
- The school has a core of very invested parents.
- There is greater interaction with parents, involving them more in the life of the school and the education of their children.
- The school has strengthened the number of community partners and increased the impact of these relationships for students.
- Social workers are having a major impact on strengthening relationships with students and their families, enabling stronger academic growth.

The areas of the school that remain to be improved:

- There is still not a strong enough imperative to get to school, and on time, for some students.
- Aspirations and intrinsic motivations are not sufficiently high for some students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The School Corporation has not implemented the full degree of support to the school as detailed in the SIG application.
- The support of turnaround partners has not materialized to the extent outlined in the SIG application.
- There has been limited direct monitoring by the School Corporation of the impact of school improvement strategies on the quality of learning.
- Specific success criteria, for the impact of actions by both the School Corporation and the school, are not routinely present.
- The staff selection process, although conducted at the earliest opportunity possible, resulted in the loss of some teachers with improvement potential, while others who remained have not stepped up as required.
- The lateness with which the school was able to appoint new staff limited the availability of highly experienced and qualified staff.
- There is some lack of clarity in the leadership structure of the school, resulting from the appointment of two personnel with 'principal' in their title.
- The quality of learning is not sufficiently high in too many classrooms to improve student outcomes at the pace required.
- Learning objectives, although present, are not always clear measurable and understood by all students. Checking for progress towards them is not consistently evident during and at the end of lessons.
- Many opportunities are missed for students to strengthen their learning through collaborative activity.
- Strategies that require all students to engage intellectually with the content of the lesson are not in common usage.
- There remains insufficient scaffolding and differentiation in many classrooms.
- There is not a common, consistent picture between all teachers of what high quality learning looks like in practice.
- The feedback provided to teachers from classroom visits has not always been coherently focused on the priority development that will have most impact for learning.
- The extended day has had limited success, with low attendance rates.
- Too few students are following advanced programs.

- Some parents remain difficult to reach and are not working in strong enough partnership with the school.
- Some staff do not trust the School Corporation to follow through on promises made with respect to the building and believe that representatives are not in school sufficiently to know how to support them.
- While students are involved in organizing activities and fund raising, there are limited opportunities for them to influence and evaluate school improvement.
- While there are opportunities for parents and community members to be involved in decision making with the school, this could usefully be strengthened further.

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation: The school's overall performance and the extent to which the SIG funding has resulted in significant improvement:

This school has made unsatisfactory improvement.

This year has been a steep learning curve for both the school and the School Corporation. There are numerous examples of a positive impact on the work of the school. However, the timing of the application being accepted resulted in the critical component of teacher appointments being made far later than desirable. Crucially, however, the turnaround principal was appointed in time to be involved in the process. While there has been a significant increase in the commitment of the faculty to meeting the needs of the students, many have required greater support and guidance than anticipated. Further, while the appointment of the turnaround principal has been successfully achieved, the strategy of also utilizing a principal with responsibility for climate and organization has resulted in a lack of clarity about the leadership of the school. In addition some anticipated external partners identified within the SIG application have not materialized. These key factors have meant that the progress made this year has not produced the level of gains that are required. Nevertheless, the School Corporation remains committed to the principles of the SIG application and determined that the school shall improve with appropriate urgency.

Much attention has been paid to producing greater coherence to the curriculum, which is now much more closely rooted in the State Standards. There is greater consistency between different teachers and some useful collaboration between teachers of different subjects. The basic components of a learning cycle, with timely assessments to support student growth, as well as curriculum improvement, are being put into place. Teachers have been provided with time within the schedule to support these developments. There are appropriate support classes for students who require targeted improvement, although there remains a need to increase opportunities for, and take-up of, advanced programs. The addition of a sixth period has not worked. Attendance rates have fallen over the year and student and teacher enthusiasm for the idea has waned.

A significant part of the early school year focused on enabling teachers to achieve the basic requirements to support learning in their classrooms, especially with regard to managing student behavior. In most classrooms teachers are developing the range of strategies that they use to strengthen learning, with increasing opportunities for collaboration between students and a less teacher centered approach. However, the school has much work to do if it is to achieve all of the components of high quality learning in every classroom. This is the major focus of activity next year, with the introduction of the TAP initiative.

While some turnaround partners have not emerged and the School Corporation has not been able to fulfill the entirety of its planned support and monitoring, there is a correlation between the funding within the SIG application, personnel within the school and the work undertaken. Counselors and social workers have been especially effective at raising student and family aspirations and overcoming some of the external barriers that impact adversely on learning. The school has successfully increased the contribution made by community partners and this is positively supporting school improvement in a range of areas. The school has the capacity to increase the rate of improvement next academic year, although this will remain at risk if the leadership issue is not resolved successfully.

Commentary on SIG improvement areas:

Staffing and Governance

The School Corporation modified practices and policies to enable the school to implement the turnaround model appropriately. The turnaround principal was appointed as outlined in the SIG application, having the skills and experience identified within it. She was appointed in time to undertake the selection of staff for the school, which was also carried out with fidelity to the application. While increased capacity within the administration was required, the strategy of appointing two principals, one with responsibility for curriculum and instruction and the other climate and operations has, in practice, resulted in some lack of clarity in lines of accountability. This has slowed progress and resulted in lack of certainty for some staff. The very significant change in staff has resulted in an attitudinal shift within the school. There is now greater commitment from staff to meeting the needs of students, with raised expectations and increased energy. There is also greater consistency in their interactions with students, who recognize that more adults in the building are holding them accountable and challenging them to succeed. As a result, attendance has improved and tardiness has decreased. However, this has yet to impact all students, so that for some, there is still not enough imperative to get to school, and on time.

The timing of the notification of the success of the SIG application meant that the process of putting a faculty together took place later than desirable. This resulted in some mismatch in the release and retention of existing staff and the limited availability of highly qualified and experienced staff to replace those who left. As a result, many staff in the school have required more support and guidance this year than anticipated. This too has slowed school-wide improvement, as some teachers have required support with the basics of classroom management rather than helping them to hone or fine tune skills that are already well developed. Nevertheless, most staff have bought into the change process underway, with an acceptance of the need for change and the commitment to achieve it. However, the School Corporation has yet to gain the trust of all staff, who believe that there has been limited follow through on promises made with respect to the building and that representatives are not in school sufficiently often to know how to support and challenge them most effectively.

Support from some turnaround partners has not been utilized as fully as planned in the SIG application. However, continued support for the Freshman Academy and the establishment of the Sophomore Academy, are impacting positively on student attitudes and academic growth. Similarly the mathematics team has benefited from the external support provided through the SIG. This has helped to bring greater consistency and coherence to the mathematics curriculum for students. The school has also benefitted from some specific actions of the School Corporation, including significant support with the master schedule and mentoring for the school's leadership. However, there has been some omission, especially with regard to directly monitoring the impact of improvement actions on classrooms. The School Corporation has implemented strategies for holding school leaders accountable, through reports and meetings, as well as keeping the community at large informed of developments. However, these mechanisms have not always been rigorous and sharply focused, with measurable success criteria and milestones clearly identified.

The school is able to move into next academic year with greater capacity than it started this one. There is the capacity, both within the leadership and the faculty, to now kick on and increase the rate of improvement. However, the turnaround principal and the School Corporation will need to maintain a laser-like focus on classroom effectiveness, relentlessly pursue high quality learning and utilize the full flexibility afforded in the selection and retention of faculty.

Recommendations

- *As a matter of urgency, resolve the difficulties surrounding the two principal model. Ensure that lines of accountability are clear and understood by all so that one point of leadership can drive the school forward more rapidly.*

- *Establish more robust monitoring and evaluation by the School Corporation, with a particular focus on classroom effectiveness.*
- *Establish clearly identified success criteria, with associated timescales, to determine the impact of the actions undertaken and support provided by the School Corporation and external partners.*
- *Ensure that the full flexibility afforded the school in the recruitment and retention of staff is utilized in ratcheting up the quality and impact of instruction.*
- *Increase communication between the School Corporation and staff to ensure that they are fully informed about future plans and developments.*

Strengthen the instructional program

The school faced considerable challenges in establishing and maintaining a master schedule for the start of this year, although this was achieved through persistence and the support of the School Corporation. There are historical examples of programs for individual students that have not been fully appropriate for them and their future aspirations, or with graduation gaps and missing components. Such problems with students' credit accumulation are being corrected and the master schedule is being more effectively used to provide appropriate programs for students. At present however, there remain examples of students following lower level or general courses when they have already been successful in higher or more specialized ones. In addition, some students have community elements, such as acting as aides in classrooms where they are not utilized sufficiently to make productive use of their time. Too few students follow an advanced program. Counselors have been highly successful in getting graduation requirements better understood by students and their families and in making transcripts understandable and available. As a result, students are much more aware of their progress towards graduation. This is helping to focus students more routinely on their success, as well as raising their aspirations for their futures. This is a major factor supporting increased motivation, improved attitudes and more positive behavior for many students.

Another factor driving positive attitudes from students is the work of the Freshman and Sophomore Academies, where the organization around small learning communities is helping to individualize relationships and support. This is an example of an effective turnaround partnership. Work to date has ensured that the curriculum is more tied to State Standards, with more effective pacing to map out progression over the trimester. Greater consistency and coherence within the curriculum are resulting from greater collaboration between teachers, with growing examples of collegiate activity. This means that connections are being made between content areas, especially English and Social Studies, providing more context and broader understanding for students. Greater articulation between courses in the same content area is providing better continuity and more progressive development of key skills and ideas. Some teachers also understand that greater consistency in language, terminology and expectations would further strengthen coherence and continuity for students and are starting to focus on these aspects also.

There is some use of data to focus interventions and special programs for some students, including the READ 180 program for example. Much additional support for students is currently provided through such specific activities and small pull-out groups, although the turnaround principal is looking to increase the degree of support that pushes into classrooms, working with students in the normal classroom environment. Data is also being used to identify relative strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, where most students get the right or wrong answers in a diagnostic test for example. This in turn is beginning to change the emphasis, focus and pacing of the curriculum.

Recommendations

- *Continually monitor and evaluate the curriculum to ensure that it is meeting the needs and aspirations of the students in the most effective way. Ensure that data is more universally used to identify where adaptations and modifications to the curriculum are needed.*
- *Seek ways of providing more push-in and inclusive support for students in everyday classroom settings.*

- *Provide greater opportunities for advanced programs, through planned progression routes within the master schedule and by utilizing the additional time available through the extended learning time.*
- *Further strengthen links between subjects and continuity within subjects, and develop a common language for key curriculum elements, skills and expectations.*
- *Develop a shared vision of the skills and experiences that enable a graduate to have career or college success and ensure that these are developed progressively from the time a student arrives at the school.*

Use data to inform and differentiate instruction

Relationships between adults and students have become more conducive to learning and thereby more productive, providing a more secure base on which to improve students' academic performance. There are positive signs of improving interim test outcomes as a result. However, the quality of learning is not yet sufficiently high in enough classrooms to improve student outcomes at the pace required. Classrooms are becoming less teacher-centered, with many teachers trying new strategies to engage and motivate students more extensively. For example, the use of technology is evident in many classrooms and there is a greater focus on collaborative working in classrooms. However, many opportunities are still missed for students to strengthen their learning through such collaborative activity. Further, strategies that require all students to engage intellectually throughout the lesson are not in common usage. Too frequently, students can easily disengage, without disturbing the learning of others, or can hide behind other students answering all of the questions without sufficient intervention from the teacher.

Teachers use learning objectives as the basis of their planning, although they are not always clear, measurable and understood by all students. Neither are they consistently used to place learning in context, and to provide continuity with previous and future work. As a result, students usually know what they are doing, but not always why they are doing it. Checking for progress towards learning objectives is not consistently evident during lessons, to enable teachers to modify and adapt their plans as the lesson progresses. Checking for understanding is not uniform at the end of classes either, so that teachers have insufficient evidence on which to adapt the proceeding lesson. Nevertheless, there is a growing recognition of the importance of assessment in the learning cycle and the need to use data to drive instruction. For example, there is an increasing use of rubrics to help students identify what they are expected to achieve and provide an idea of where improvements need to be made in their work. However, there remains insufficient scaffolding and differentiation in many classrooms. Students following higher level courses welcome the additional challenge that they provide, although they recognize that sometimes this is related to the quantity of work provided, rather than more challenging ideas and deeper levels of knowledge and understanding.

There is evidence of teachers responding positively to the instructional support and guidance that they have received this year and this is helping to improve the impact of their work. Classroom visits have been undertaken, although the feedback provided has not always coherently focused on the priority development for teaching that will have most impact for learning. Teachers do not share a consistent picture of what high quality learning looks like in practice, and thereby what they are trying to achieve. The school is well placed to build on the experiences of utilizing a teacher effectiveness rubric and providing instructional support to improve individual and collective practice and to move into the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) next academic year. Nevertheless, it is imperative that individual teacher development and support focus upon the key skills and strategies that will have most impact on student achievement. It is also imperative that the agenda for individual teachers is challenging, but achievable and sequential. The model must be used to drive instructional improvement at the rate required as the school does not have the luxury of time to improve this aspect.

Recommendations

- *Use the TAP rubric and associated resources to develop a common understanding of high quality learning across the whole faculty.*
- *Ensure that support for individual teachers is targeted on those developments that will have most impact for students' learning; that it is sequential so that teachers are working on limited issues at one time.*
- *Ensure that the work of the instructional improvement team is monitored and evaluated rigorously to drive improvement at the rate required.*
- *Review the work expected of students on higher level courses to ensure that they provide deeper intellectual challenge, rather than a greater quantity of work alone.*

Increase learning time

In compliance with its SIG application, Hammond High School has implemented an additional 70 minute period at the end of the school day and has planned a six-week summer program for this school year. The extended day program has enabled the school to successfully address the identified needs of some students, including providing additional tutoring for students who are struggling or at risk, as well as providing enrichment opportunities for others. The school has however experienced some challenges with the implementation of the extended day. Students perceive the program to be optional, regarding the extended time, not as an essential component of the school day, but rather as a distinct and separate add-on after school program. Overall, the program's offer has not been sufficient to attract enough students and so many lack the motivation to attend. Consequently attendance has reduced over time and is now poor.

The school recognizes the shortcomings in the arrangement of the extended day and has made the decision to make the program mandatory for the next school year. The necessary communication has gone out to students, parents and the community but is meeting with some initial resistance. For some students an extended day program will interfere with their after school jobs and hence their ability to supplement family earnings. Teenage mothers also believe that it will create problems with their child care arrangements and responsibilities. Further, some students question why they need additional time at all, as they are on track to graduate and do not require additional tutoring or enrichment. This dilemma must be resolved with urgency; to ensure greatest attendance, the master schedule would encompass the additional time with core classes occurring during any period of the day to remove any idea of optional time; to provide greatest flexibility it would occur at the start or end of the day and remain optional, but run the risk of poor attendance. Decisions must be based on what is required of the SIG application and what best raises the amount of purposeful and effective learning time that improves student progress and their academic outcomes.

The six-week summer program is in the calendar, although it is not being planned for all students, but targeted at those most in need or most at risk of not demonstrating growth at a sufficient pace. Given student response to the extended day care is needed to ensure that students see the benefit of this summer activity if attendance is to be maintained at an acceptable level.

Recommendations

- *Strategically define the purpose of the extended day and extended calendar programs and effectively communicate this to all stakeholders.*
- *Differentiate the extended programs for students who are on track for graduating and who have a high GPA, by exploring and developing a dual credit program, a College Now program or supported internships.*
- *Ensure that increased learning time effectively engages and improves the outcomes for students who are at risk of failing their end of course assessments (ECA), are in credit deficit, or are at risk of dropout and not graduating.*
- *Coordinate the services of the community partners to support students who are unable to attend the extended programs because of jobs or child rearing responsibilities.*

Socio-emotional and Community Oriented Services

Hammond high school has been very thoughtful in its implementation of socio-emotional and community oriented services for its students. There are very strong and positive relationships between the parent liaisons, counselors and the social workers which work well to deliver a systematically coordinated effort to meet the needs of students. The parent liaisons are very proactive and have cultivated numerous links with community partners to support the students and families of the school, well beyond those indicated in the SIG application. It is evident that they are fully invested in the success of the school and indeed in the success and welfare of students. There is greater interaction with parents this year, with more of them actively involved in the life of the school and the education of their children. The school has a core of very invested parents, although some others remain difficult to reach and are not yet working in strong enough partnership with the school. While there are opportunities for parents and community members to be involved in decision making with the school, this could usefully be strengthened further.

The school has strengthened the number of community partners and increased the impact of these relationships for students. Many representatives of community organizations are alumni or local residents and have a vested interest in the school. Services provided through the community include bible clubs, assistance to girls in facing the pressure and influence of modern society, poor relief to families including rent and pharmaceuticals and classes on teen dating violence and health. There is a deliberate and well strategized approach to the coordination of these services on the part of the parent liaisons, who have worked very effectively and independently of support or monitoring from the school leadership. However, school leadership should become more involved by way of support, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the work to support the students improves even further. Similarly, while students are involved in organizing activities and fundraising, there are limited opportunities for them to be involved in influencing and evaluating school improvement.

The social workers are also very proactive in attending to the socio-emotional needs of students. They are constantly engaged with students either in their offices or visiting them at home whenever there is an issue with attendance, for example. They have documented a list of services for students and their parents that are available in the community to provide assistance in numerous areas. Students and their parents have these lists, but are also given support, when needed, to access these services. The social workers successfully assist students in navigating their difficult social realities, through counseling and by building trusting and supportive relationships with them. Counselors also work in a coordinated way with the social workers and parent liaisons to support students, particularly with graduation requirements. Students more than previously, understand the graduation requirements in terms of credit accumulation and ECA requirement; they know their standing and what they need to accomplish in order to successfully graduate. They have information and know how to research further on colleges that may be of interest to them. They have been supported in setting career goals and have established career plans. They have information on available scholarships, provided with a handbook on accessing them and are provided help in doing so.

Overall, the work of the school in supporting the socio-emotional needs of students this year has improved very significantly. This is attributable to the dedication, competence, hard work and passion of the social workers, parent liaisons and counselors.

Recommendations

- *The leadership of the school should become more involved in setting success criteria and targets for the social workers, counselors and parent liaisons, and monitoring and evaluating their work.*
- *Develop further strategies to engage those families who are currently harder to reach and work with them so that they can better support learning at home.*
- *Work to increase student voice in the school and their involvement in decision making. Strengthen the role of families and community members in the same process.*
- *Explore the possibilities of establishing relationships with local colleges and universities to institute a College Now Program to supplement the extended day offerings.*